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SUBJECT: SOMALI DIASPORA HIGHLIGHTS THE CHALLENGES OF
NATION-BUILDING

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a well-attended conference on May 22 with keynote speeches by Somali Transitional Federal Government Foreign Minister Jangeli, former Prime Minister of Canada Joe Clark, and AF DAS Jim Swan, the Canadian Friends of Somalia attempted to raise awareness of the "problems and challenges of nation-building in Somalia." The Somali Diaspora here reflects the same clan divisions that would be evident in Mogadishu, but this event succeeded in drawing out a number of Canadian officials on the issue of support for the TFG and helped to galvanize the community itself in its efforts to assist their homeland. Given the drive to marshal resources for a few missions rather than being spread thin everywhere, the government of Prime Minister Harper will not make Somalia a major priority. However, there are a few niche areas -- conflict resolution, constitution writing, and federalism -- where Canadian expertise could be helpful to Somalia's reconstruction, while the Somali Diaspora here could also play a supporting role. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On May 22, the Canadian Friends of Somalia, a loosely-organized Diaspora group based in Ottawa, organized a conference entitled "The Challenges and Opportunities of Nation-Building in Somalia." According to one participant, the group represents several but not all Somali clans (the Hawiye in particular were apparently not present), as the Diaspora here has brought with it various clan rivalries. Over 200 Somali-Canadians, Canadian and U.S. public officials, and NGO reps attended. The group obtained a conference room on Parliament Hill through Liberal MP Boris Wrzesnewskyj, whose Toronto Etobicoke "riding" (district) has one of the highest concentrations of Somalis in Canada. Wrzesnewskyj also addressed the conference, along with former Prime Minister Joe Clark, TFG Foreign Minister Ali Jama Jangeli, and, by teleconference, UN Special Envoy Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jim Swan and Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Director General for Africa David Angell made presentations on U.S. and Canadian policy toward Somalia specifically and Africa more generally.

FORMER PM CLARK -- IS AFRICA FALLING OFF CANADA'S MAP?

¶3. (SBU) Former PM Clark suggested that the Somali Diaspora -- about 20,000 in the Toronto area alone --

could have more influence on Canadian policy and on events in its homeland if it were less divided, if the younger generation (which is quickly getting disconnected from its homeland) were more engaged, and if it received more assistance from NGOs and/or the government to get better organized. He admitted that there was no groundswell of support in Canada for doing more for Africa, and commented that the government was able largely to ignore the continent and focus instead primarily on Afghanistan and the U.S. But Clark, who has remained active in a number of NGOs and think tanks working with African and Western hemispheric issues, indicated that there were some creative ways for individuals and groups to be helpful, citing "Project Plowshare," which aims to stop remittances from going to weapons purchases, as one example. Clark challenged the Canadian government to focus on the good news coming out of much of Africa and pay it more attention. Canada's niche on certain issues, Clark said, as well as its moral standing, could make a difference in Africa, asking "what other country will engage if we don't?"

FM JANGELI ON THE SITUATION IN SOMALIA

14. (SBU) FM Ali Jama Jangeli, one of several Canadian-Somalis who have returned to their homeland to take up high office, explained that the TFG was working on several fronts. First, it is pushing a short-term political process focused of reconciliation among the clans and factions, offering full support to the UN Special Envoy and the national reconciliation process that will unfold in July. Second, it

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is moving ahead on institution-building, which needs the support of the international community and of Somalis themselves. Third, it aims to facilitate humanitarian aid, which is getting more difficult to get into Somalia because piracy is driving the price of food up and making shipments more problematic. Fourth, the TFG has a long-term road map to democratic governance, culminating with elections in 2009 under a new constitution. Underlying all of this, Jangeli emphasized, was security, without which none of these key pillars could yield success. He commented that all areas need to move forward and that they are mutually reinforcing, not sequential.

15. (SBU) Jangeli's message to the international community was that "it is time to do what is right," and to Canada "we need your help." He urged that foreigners not remain paralyzed by frustrations over the well-meaning but failed efforts at nation-building in Somalia of the 1990's, suggesting that "the situation is different now." He urged the Diaspora to reconcile, stating that it remains more divided than Somalis in the homeland. Finally, Jangeli pointed to progress that is taking place already in parts of Somalia -- functioning markets, 15 radio stations, freedom of the press, and numerous cell phones -- as reasons for optimism. He said in conclusion that Somalis and international partners must be united to help Somalia finally to pull itself together.

SPECIAL ENVOY OULD-ABDALLAH URGES DIASPORA TO RETURN AND HELP

16. (SBU) Special Envoy Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah focused his remarks via teleconference on what the Diaspora could do to help in Somalia's reconstruction. He said that the role of Somalis living abroad was significant to the local economy, with remittances annually of about US\$1 billion. He expressed satisfaction with the recent Djibouti meeting, which many did not believe would succeed. Ould-Abdallah said that he was now focused on five objectives: to resolve local disputes peacefully; to attempt to impose a cease-fire; to organize UN peacekeeping support; to increase humanitarian access; and, to seek longer term reconciliation through a

truth and reconciliation process. He urged the Diaspora not to bring back to Somalia the divisions of their respective communities, and told the participants they were still needed in Somalia.

DAS SWAN ON U.S. OBJECTIVES IN SOMALIA

¶7. (SBU) DAS Swan described U.S. priorities in Somalia, notably encouraging political dialogue and reconciliation, strengthening development and humanitarian relief, and facilitating full deployment of an African Union peacekeeping force. He called upon the Diaspora to play a helpful role in Somalia's reconstruction, and warned against the desire of some elements to play the role of spoiler. Swan detailed U.S. humanitarian support for Somalia and our continuing support for peacekeeping efforts. He commented that there would be a real danger of stagnation if the political process were delayed, and urged the participants to support the Qwere delayed, and urged the participants to support the ongoing progress.

DG ANGELL ON CANADA'S ROLE

¶8. (SBU) Canadian DG for Africa David Angell highlighted the statement of then-Foreign Minister Bernier regarding Somalia on February 1, in which the FM urged a political solution to end the violence and keep the humanitarian pipeline open. He acknowledged U.S. leadership in the evolution of the Contact Group, and offered support for ongoing mediation efforts between the TFG and opposition in the interest of reducing the power of the spoilers. Angell confirmed that Canada remains engaged in Somalia in a variety of areas, including humanitarian assistance, media projects promoting a free

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press, and support for political reconciliation.

¶9. (SBU) In a separate meeting with DAS Swan, Angell said that Canada was "keen to be more involved with the Contact Group." He called a "Catch 22" situation that Canada had not been invited to be a full member because it was not doing more, but that he was not able to interest his superiors to have Canada do more because it is not a member of the Contact Group. He expressed the hope that, with the recent reorganization of the Cluster Groups, Canada's involvement could now be more robust. Angell said that he believes the approach of Ould-Abdallah to work on the first track with Somalis and then move to include the international community makes sense.

¶10. (SBU) Comment: Canada has provided C\$15 million in humanitarian assistance to Somalia since 2006, and another C\$3.75 million in regional funding to UN agencies, making Somalia one of the 25 countries that receive Canadian assistance, albeit not as one of Canada's top priorities. Canada would nonetheless like to stay engaged in Somalia for moral and domestic political reasons, but knows it does not have the resources or clout to be one of the key players. Still, given Somalia's need for help working through the thorny issue of federalism, writing a constitution, and reconciliation and conflict resolution, Canada's expertise could be useful.

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WILKINS